

Sustainability and Spanish Immersion in Central America

Week 1: Arrival and program orientation: Antigua, Guatemala

Departing from Los Angeles, travel with your group to the beautiful and historic city of Antigua Guatemala. Walk down cobblestone streets, admire the colorful storefronts and colonial churches, visit local markets, and enjoy the taste of freshly made tortillas. Staying in a cozy guest house overlooking the city, the group will spend 3-4 days setting the foundations for an incredible journey ahead. We'll learn more about the program and our fellow group members, and discuss strategies for staying safe and healthy while traveling.

Weeks 2-3: Spanish language immersion: Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

Travel west from Antigua towards Quetzaltenango (AKA Xela), Guatemala's second largest city, to start two weeks of 1:1 Spanish language study. The first week finds us based at a school outside the city, in the rural coffee growing region of Guatemala. Here, the group will study Spanish, participate in community projects and activities, and learn about the history of the region. The second week you'll head in to Xela and move in with local homestay families. You'll continue Spanish classes in the morning and spend the afternoons participating in activities like cooking classes, dance classes, and perhaps a local soccer game.

Week 4 - 5: Trekking, Yoga and Sustainable Agriculture: Lago Atitlan, Guatemala

After two weeks focusing on the Spanish language, we'll get out of our heads and into our bodies as we trek from Xela to the ancient volcanic crater lake of Lago Atitlan. Spending 3 days and 2 nights hiking through forests, cornfields, and coffee plantations, we make our way from the bustling city to the tranquil shores of Lago Atitlan. Once there, we'll settle in for a reflective retreat, learning about yoga, meditation, and self care. After grounding ourselves through yoga, we'll dive into a week of farming. We'll be working alongside local Mayan farmers in an effort to diversify coffee fields. Through hands on experience, we will learn about permaculture, organic agriculture, and ecosystem restoration.

Week 6: Sustainable development and design: Near Guatemala City, Guatemala

We partner with an innovative design and architecture organization near Guatemala City. We'll visit a sustainably designed apartment in Guatemala City and learn about eco-friendly design in a densely populated, urban context. Then the group heads out to the countryside to deepen our learning about sustainable development efforts in a more rural setting. Here, we get our hands dirty and develop some hard skills as we assist locals with home construction.

Week 7: Economic development and sustainability on the coast: El Paredon, Guatemala

Traveling to Guatemala's Pacific coast, we partner with an NGO that is working to promote education, enterprise and employment opportunities for the local community. We'll learn about the impact of tourism on the economy and environment, while taking the opportunity to enjoy time on the beach and even try our hand at surfing.

Week 8: Student Directed Travel: Guatemala

Put your newly acquired travel skills to use! Your group will plan, organize and implement the adventures this week - how you get there, where you'll stay, how you manage your budget, and what you'll do are up to the group to decide. Past groups have visited the stunning sapphire pools of Semuc Champey, explored the caves at Lanquin, or visited ancient Mayan ruins. What will your group decide?

Week 9 - 10: Spanish and homestays: Turrialba, Costa Rica

Adios Guatemala, Hola Costa Rica! Spend the next two weeks studying Spanish in the charming town of Turrialba in Costa Rica's central valley. With nearby rivers, volcanos, and rainforests, you'll live with local families and study Spanish in the mornings, and have afternoons to connect with host families, learn salsa dancing, explore Costa Rican cooking, take rainforest walks, and participate in language exchanges with local English students.

Week 11: Turtle conservation and sustainable agriculture: Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica

Spend your final week of volunteering on the beautiful Nicoya Peninsula. We'll help with turtle conservation efforts through night patrols on the beach to watch for nesting sea turtles. Perhaps we'll even see baby sea turtles making their way to the ocean! We'll also continue our studies in organic agriculture as we work on CIRENAS's permaculture farm. In our free time,

there will be opportunities to explore the nearby national wildlife refuge and catch some sunsets on the beach.

Week 12: SCUBA certification on the island of Roatan

Fly to the island of Roatan off the Caribbean coast of Honduras for a week of rest, relaxation, and some of the best SCUBA diving in the world. Stay at a local guest house on the beach and spend the days taking a course leading to your PADI Open Water SCUBA certification. You'll also spend a day with the Roatan Marine Park, learning about some of the environmental issues facing the coral reef system and conservation efforts to preserve it. During this time, the group will explore ways of preparing for the upcoming reintegration to life at home, and strategies in keeping our sense of adventure and inquiry engaged in the context of our daily lives. Enjoy this last week in Central America and celebrate all of the accomplishments of the semester!

**Carpe Diem reserves the right to make changes to the program at any time, and indeed has the responsibility to do so in some instances; changes may be required to provide the best possible experience, protect the safety of participants, or respond to changes in weather or political conditions.*